

December 13, 2021

**APPROVED**

1 In attendance: Dwight Brew, Chris Yates, Will Ludt, Jared Hardner, and Tracie Adams.  
2 Staff in attendance: Natasha Kypfer, Town Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary  
3 (remote)  
4 Also in attendance: Steve Whitman, and Zak Brohinsky (remote), Resilience Planning & Design  
5

6 **1. Call to Order**

7 Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.  
8

9 **2. Update on Outreach and Marketing of Online Engagement Tools**

10 Steve Whitman explained that the online worksheet was kept open and online engagement was  
11 increased. This led to approximately an additional 40 responses. The worksheet is proposed to be  
12 kept open for another six weeks. He is proposing that each member of the Committee sign up to  
13 go speak to 1-2 civic committees/groups.  
14

15 Natasha Kypfer explained that the Community Development Department proceeded with  
16 outreach through the Recreation Department newsletter, the Library newsletter, the Amherst  
17 Citizen online edition and on their Facebook page, the ACTV channel, and through the Town's  
18 Vimeo site.  
19

20 Will Ludt stated that the Heritage Commission is signed up to speak to the Garden Club in  
21 January.  
22

23 In response to a question from Dwight Brew regarding why additional input is being requested  
24 after the original survey, Steve Whitman explained that this allows for a broad array of ways to  
25 give input. The worksheet is a larger ask than the survey, in terms of the open-ended questions.  
26 These responses give additional context.  
27

28 Will Ludt stated that he believes each board/commission should have some discussion regarding  
29 the Master Plan update at their meetings.  
30

31 **3. Initial Findings from the Forum**

32 In response to a question from Chris Yates, Steve Whitman stated that approximately 66  
33 responses to the worksheet have been received; 20-25 of those were received during the public  
34 forum.  
35

36 Zak Brohinsky explained that the completion rate for the worksheet appears to be higher for  
37 online responses. He noted that a few themes seem to be becoming apparent from the responses:

- 38 1) open space/conservation & resource protection/trails & recreation.  
39 2) Amherst's rural character: some people seem to define that as larger, single-family  
40 lots, while others have an issue with this limiting the amount of affordable housing in  
41 Town. Affordable housing was also a popular theme topic. There seem to be more  
42 responses indicating a desire to include affordable housing options in Town, than not.  
43 3) Traffic comments across a number of the topics, some regarding the lack of  
44 walkability around Town, and some dealing with traffic.

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45  
46 Jared Hardner noted that it would be interesting to see the findings from the worksheet cross-  
47 referenced with that from the survey. Affordable housing was not as pronounced of a topic that  
48 came through from the survey.

49  
50 Chris Yates stated that he believes the public is unclear as to how the Planning Board can  
51 manage development. Will Ludt noted that there will be a Planning Board public hearing on  
52 Wednesday on proposed zoning amendments. Chris Yates explained that some of the proposals  
53 include putting a cap on the percentage over baseline density on Planned Residential  
54 Developments (PRDs) and trying to define ‘rural character.’

55  
56 Tracie Adams suggested that some of the worksheet responses may hold possible definitions to  
57 ‘rural character.’ Zak Brohinsky stated that he would review the responses and pull out words or  
58 themes that may fit.

59  
60 **4. Next Steps in the Planning Process and Schedule**

61 Steve Whitman stated that the intention is still to complete the Master Plan update by July 2022.  
62 He noted that Tom Gauthier is helping him to get the information for Souhegan 2.0 to include in  
63 the Plan. He asked for help finding photos of seniors to include. The online engagement will  
64 continue into January. There will be an engagement report in February and focus groups could be  
65 held in March.

66  
67 Chris Yates noted that approximately 100-120 people originally stated interest in being part of  
68 the focus groups and he would like to make sure they are included in the process.

69  
70 Jared Hardner stated that the Conservation Commission has started working on some draft  
71 materials for water resources to be used during the update process for potential goals and  
72 implementation.

73  
74 Steve Whitman stated that themes will likely begin to emerge in January. The group can then  
75 discuss future land use. The themes will likely have clear ideas for actions and measurable items  
76 that can be included in a draft Plan.

77  
78 Will Ludt stated that groups, like the Garden Club, will be able to submit their comments  
79 through the worksheet and by volunteering for the focus groups. Steve Whitman stated that  
80 people can also be involved during the draft plan review that will occur for a couple of months,  
81 likely into June. Usually, it is recommended that the Planning Board hold more than one public  
82 hearing on this topic.

83  
84 In response to a question from Jared Hardner regarding when concrete ideas are going to be put  
85 on paper, Steve Whitman stated that this will happen during these Committee meetings. If there  
86 are a reasonable number of themes decided on, certain groups can start to focus on items through  
87 workshops, which may be more necessary than focus groups. Actionables are needed to review  
88 with these groups before holding the workshops.

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90 Chris Yates stated that the timeline seems short for moving forward with actionables and public  
91 involvement. Steve Whitman stated that the Committee will shortly begin to review potential  
92 themes and start to move forward with actionables.

93

94 **5. Review of the 2010 Vision, Goals, and Key Recommendations**

95 Steve Whitman stated that the Vision generally states a future condition and is present tense,  
96 active voice. The 2010 Vision was: *“Amherst will preserve and enhance its unique rural and  
97 small-town character. Amherst will guide development in a manner that is ecologically  
98 sustainable and protective of the environment.”* He stated that this was likely very forward-  
99 thinking for the time but may be missing items.

100

101 Jared Hardner stated that there may be issues with trying to define ‘rural and small-town  
102 character.’ These may have different meanings to different people.

103

104 Chris Yates noted that the community wants to preserve the rural character, but also modernize a  
105 bit in order to attract new people into the community. A good example of that is the new Bicycle  
106 & Pedestrian Advisory Committee and its projects.

107

108 There was discussion regarding the screening of new developments being important, along with  
109 the protection of water resources.

110

111 Dwight Brew stated that actions are needed to implement goals. He thinks the 2010 Vision  
112 statement is okay but does not involve a level of implementation.

113

114 Tracie Adams stated that the Vision statement needs to reflect the Town and involve possible  
115 next steps.

116

117 Steve Whitman asked if the Committee wants to have a goals section come after the Vision or  
118 delve into the themes and see what goals come to light. Dwight Brew stated that he believed this  
119 project was going to lead to certain themes that cross the multiple traditional areas.

120

121 In response to a question from Dwight Brew regarding examples of multi-functional themes,  
122 Steve Whitman stated that some of the options may include infrastructure (natural infrastructure,  
123 built infrastructure, and social infrastructure); natural and cultural resources; economic  
124 development (nodes of mixed-use development); housing; health & recreation; and quality  
125 infrastructure & municipal services. The Plan could also have an energy & sustainability theme  
126 instead. Another approach would be to look at themes for resources (nodes/activity,  
127 infrastructure, etc.).

128

129 Zak Brohinsky stated that some of the other themes proposed on the posters at the public forum  
130 were population/housing, water/land use, economy, transportation, heritage/culture, recreation,  
131 and land use. Steve Whitman stated that he would not include a theme on population, as it is  
132 carried throughout the other themes.

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133  
134 Dwight Brew stated that the Committee needs to think about the audience of the Master Plan. He  
135 stated that it seems as though the approach may be different if the audience is intended to only  
136 read one section, versus reading about the whole Town. Steve Whitman stated that he believes  
137 the audience is potentially new board/commission members and developers. He does not believe  
138 many members of the public read Master Plans before deciding to move into Town.

139  
140 Chris Yates stated that the Master Plan is to identify where the Town is today, where it would  
141 like to be in 10-20 years and the actionables to get to that place. The plan is being written for the  
142 community as a whole.

143  
144 Dwight Brew stated that the Implementation Plan might more naturally attach to certain themes.  
145 The Committee could work backward from action items to understand which themes are  
146 appropriate.

147  
148 Steve Whitman suggested that Resilience could draft a few themes for review at the January  
149 meeting. The Committee can then tease out a list of actions and the themes will become clearer.

150  
151 Jared Hardner noted that the 2010 Master Plan featured 10 Key Master Plan Recommendations.  
152 The Committee discussed if these items could be used for potential themes.

153  
154 Dwight Brew stated that the items from the survey could be tagged to each one of these 10 Key  
155 ideas. Jared Hardner noted that approximately six of the items on the list struck him as clear,  
156 active recommendations. Steve Whitman stated that he believes there could be 4-5 themes  
157 gathered from the 10 Key items list. Data can then be teased out from the existing conditions,  
158 and the vision and steps to get there can be included.

159  
160 Dwight Brew stated that he believes economic development and affordability seem to be left out  
161 of the list.

162  
163 Steve Whitman explained that he believes housing will be adequately addressed in the Master  
164 Plan. He noted that many of the worksheet responses mentioned not minding multi-unit  
165 buildings, depending on the look of the unit and which area of Town it's located in.

166  
167 Zak Brohinsky stated that there does not necessarily need to be a whole chapter for housing, but  
168 it can instead be woven into the other themes as to how it can maintain Amherst's character  
169 while still allowing for development. While the process may lead to 4-6 themes, these will also  
170 hit on a number of sectors.

171  
172 Steve Whitman explained that there was a map to go along with the 2010 recommendations that  
173 identified sectors of development in Town and discussed the rural housing areas and resources.  
174 Chris Yates stated that the map is still useful but there needs to be meaning behind the  
175 recommendations. Steve Whitman suggested that maps showing a similar pattern of development  
176 may be helpful. Chris Yates stated that he would like to see information regarding multimodal

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177 transportation areas, conservation, water treatment options, or other long-term thinking placed on  
178 the map.

179  
180 Steve Whitman stated that he and Zak Brohinsky will try to get maps on potential action items to  
181 the Committee before the next meeting.

182  
183 Tracie Adams stated that she envisions each theme potentially having its own map with potential  
184 action items.

185  
186 Will Ludt stated that the Town recently supported a Senate Bill for a multimodal path down  
187 Route 122 into Hollis. Steve Whitman stated that this path is part of the State's 10-Year Plan and  
188 will be listed in the Town's existing conditions.

189  
190 **6. Approval of Minutes November 23, 2021**

191  
192 **Tracie Adams moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 23, 2021, as**  
193 **presented. Chris Yates seconded.**

194 **Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Tracie Adams – aye; Will Ludt - aye,**  
195 **and Jared Hardner – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried.**

196  
197 **5. Old/New Business – none.**

198  
199 **Chris Yates moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:07pm. Tracie Adams seconded.**  
200 **Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Tracie Adams – aye; Will Ludt - aye,**  
201 **and Jared Hardner – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried.**

202  
203 *Respectfully submitted,*

204 *Kristan Patenaude*

205 Minutes approved: January 25, 2022